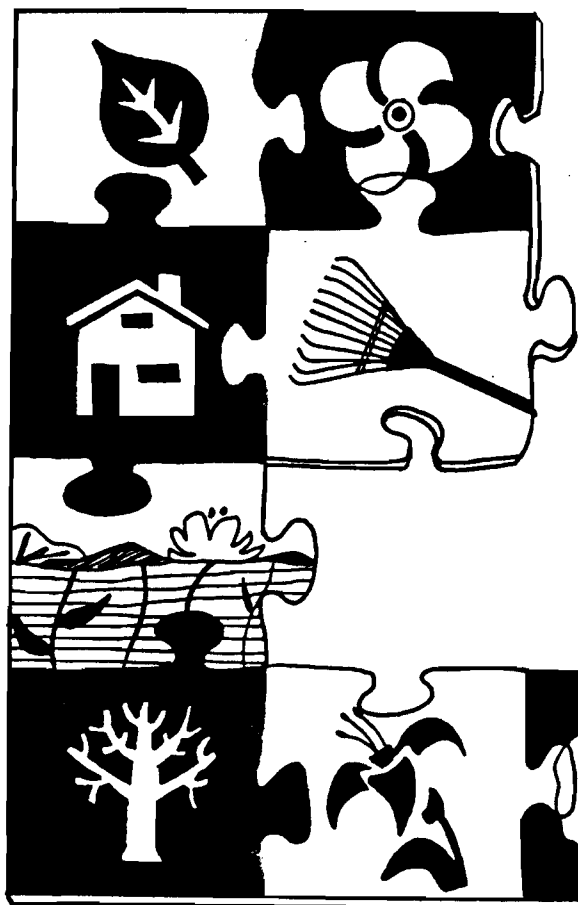
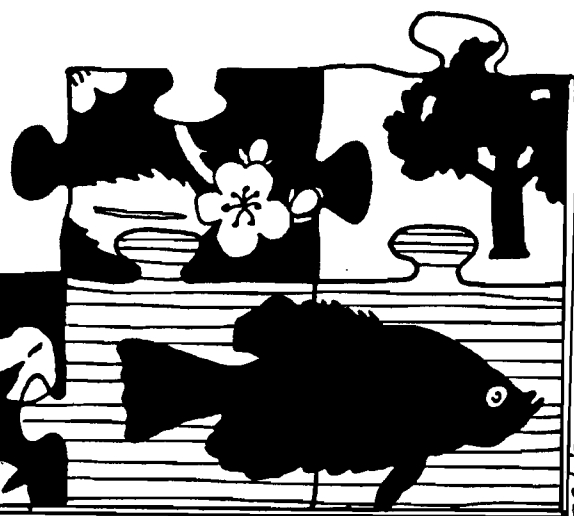


# Wisconsin LAKE FAIR

An Educational and Entertaining Lake Experience



*Discover how you  
fit into the puzzle.*



*A Guide To  
Designing a  
Lake Fair*



Co-sponsors: Area lake organizations, Wisconsin Department of  
Natural Resources, University of Wisconsin-Extension, Wisconsin  
Association of Lakes (Spring 1994)

## *A LAKE FAIR*

*We are competing for a commodity that is considered precious by members of our society....their time!*

*Life can easily become an endless stream of time traps; meetings for this, conferences for that, schedules to create, appointments to keep.*

*Our message needs to make sense, be worthwhile and delivered in an enjoyable manner. Awareness and information can be delivered by a profusion of vehicles. One of the most common procedures used by lake organizations, the University Extension and the Department of Natural Resources has been to hold seminars and workshops on a particular subject. These meetings are normally held in a standard conference room at a local motel or government office. The speaker, or speakers, address the topic at hand and the audience absorbs as much as possible. This sort of delivery is suitable for technical and detailed information to a dedicated audience.*

*It became apparent that in lake related issues these traditional meetings were not reaching all of the intended audience. An innovative approach was essential to reach the general public. The notion of a fresh method to deliver lake related education in Wisconsin was first developed in Menominee and Shawano Counties in 1991. Since that time local lake organizations, county Extension agents, DNR lakes coordinators, and Extension lake specialists have molded the Wisconsin "**Lake Fair**" concept into shape at numerous locations around the state.*

## *WHAT IS A LAKE FAIR?*

- A Lake Fair is a technique for improving the general public's understanding of lake related issues.
- A Lake Fair puts a different spin on an educational meeting.
- A Lake Fair is a strategy for the delivery of several educational messages.
- A Lake Fair is an education event that blends a sense of discovery and entertainment.
- A Lake Fair is an event that allows the participants to gain some hands-on experience and talk to experts in a very informal setting.
- A Lake Fair is a method to meet new people and build relationships within the community.
- A Lake Fair is a pleasurable way to discover more about your lake while enjoying a day with friends and family.
- A Lake Fair can be a means for local organizations to raise funds.
- A Lake Fair is a no-pressure, low-hassle day for those attending.
- A Lake Fair can be a two-edged sword educating those attending and those exhibiting.

## WHY A LAKE FAIR?

Throughout the Badger State, interest in water quality and lake issues are running high; educators have a golden opportunity to get their message out. Most of the Lake Fairs hope to attract local folks from a two or three county area, plus any of the general public and tourists passing through at the time. Some have been larger in scope; others smaller.

There is an increasing demand by lake organizations for professional assistance. The limited personnel can be more accessible to a greater number of lake organizations when there is a coordinated effort to bring large groups of people together for a general educational event.

Lake users present some unique hurdles in education. They represent a substantial variety of stakeholder groups with sometimes divergent demands: the general public, the lake property owner, those using our waters for jet skiing and those who would rather be propelled by paddle. The **Lake Fair** is an attempt to reach a broad cross-section of lake property owners and other lake users with hands-on and conceptual learning opportunities.

## REMEMBER!!

These pages contain ideas and suggestions from those of us that have experimented with this concept. They are not set in stone. Some of them may not even work for you. If you come up with new ideas or a different twist, please share them with us.

## GETTING STARTED

Lake organization representatives are best suited for playing a lead role. Active sponsorship of one or more lake organizations can be instrumental in the success of the fair. An active organizing committee is a good starting point.

Professionals to solicit can include UW-Extension lake specialists, DNR district lake management personnel, and county Extension agents. Other possibilities are local government officials and county agency personnel such as the land conservationist, zoning and planning administrators, public health officials, or sanitarians.

Chambers of commerce, local businesses, the Wisconsin Association of Lakes, or any group you see as a stakeholder in lake management can also be included. This group will not only provide great ideas for the fair, but if given ownership, can take responsibility for planning and running the fair.

How many people should be on the committee? Too many people may slow the progress; too few may cause

a shortage of needed ideas and workers. Some folks will play a larger role than others. Some may only want to use their "connections" to facilitate filling a committee need.

Allow plenty of time for planning. Many groups meet monthly and are well into the planning process ten months before the event. At the first planning meeting the committee can consider a theme for the fair, a location, and a date. The theme, if you have one, may revolve around the educational (learning) objectives of the committee.

## COMMITTEES

A chair should be selected — the "Buck" should stop with this person. The chair may also be the best choice to coordinate efforts and assign tasks. The committee should be driven by written objectives, lest the group lose sight of its purpose. Examples of objectives:

1. Raise awareness of local lake management issues among lake users, property owners and the general public.
2. Have property owners, and others, understand management factors which affect individual management decisions for lake property.
3. Build an understanding of lake management resources and information sources which are available.

4. Create an awareness of issues and solutions related to management of aquatic plants and shorelines.

You may choose to develop a theme that captures your objectives.

Subcommittees can be spawned to deal with various matters.

- Inventory the area for sites that fit the needed requirements
- Arrange for the assorted speakers, vendors and educational programs
- Deal with raising funds
- Handle publicity
- Arrange logistics and the set up of facilities
- Coordinate the event with area lake organizations
- Coordinate volunteers
- Coordinate the day's events and set up

## TIMING

Lake Fairs have been held from June through October and on weekdays and weekends. Timing can be critical; keep in mind that lake property owners who come up for a spring or summer weekend may have other items on their agendas. Nice weather may present them with a contest for their time. *One of the assumptions of the Lake Fair is that it would entice people even on a nice weekend.*

Private consultants, plant harvesters, agency types and other folks that do lake management for a living, are

getting real busy by the end of June and attending may be difficult for them. If the planning committee wishes to demonstrate aquatic plant management techniques, the fair should occur some time after aquatic plants have risen in the water column, typically May or early June in Wisconsin. Given driving time from metro areas, Saturday is probably the best day to attract weekend visitors.

## BUDGETS

As Lake Fairs have grown so has the need for financial support. Costs have included electrical hookups, tents, Port-a-Potties, advertising, mailing, and fish tanks to name a few. Some Lake Fairs have been accomplished on a **ZERO** budget, others have raised funds. Services and equipment have been donated or contributed "In Kind." Local lake organizations and businesses have been generous with their dollars and time. Donations at the door with souvenir buttons have defrayed costs.

Some monies may be raised for the fair through food sales or the sale of other items. Other fairs have charged vendors for booth space (\$10-25). Another funding source may be grants or donations from an interested industry, business or district DNR and Extension offices. Some lake fair organizers in different areas with lake fairs on different weekends have shared equipment and advertisement such as banners.

## DETAILED PLANNING

One point to consider may be defining the audience. Are they area riparians, summer tourists, or a mix of both? Are there other events running concurrently that may either conflict or complement the fair? Is it possible for local lake organizations to hold their annual meeting as part of the lake fair? How much area will you need to canvas to draw an acceptable crowd? What are the available facilities in the area?

For a real hands-on Fair it may be best done in a lake setting. Based on the theme and objectives, the committee can then brainstorm educational activities and choose from among demonstrations, speaker(s), workshops, displays, information booths with state and local agency personnel, vendors of lake management equipment, soil and water testing, hands-on activities, videotapes and other strategies. If lake equipment vendor demonstrations are desired, contact vendors well in advance of the fair.

Publicity is a key to getting people to the fair. A flyer distributed to every property owner on targeted lakes is probably the most effective way to reach this group. If hand-delivered by volunteers from the lake organization, the message is reinforced by word of mouth. "Talking up" the approaching fair at meetings of lake organizations, conservation groups and other interested groups will keep the pot boiling.

Get on the phone and call your friends and neighbors. If local lake organizations have newsletters, make use of them with periodic short articles. Of course, electronic and print media should be tapped to create interest, especially just before the fair. If non-resident lake users are a target group, point-of-use publicity might be effective; for example, placing posters at boat landings to invite boaters and anglers. Run a series of lake related articles in your local newspaper. Use state-wide lake newsletters like UWEX/DNR's Lake Tides and the Wisconsin Associations of Lakes Lake Connection. They will give you free mention. Don't forget to invite key elected officials who need to learn more about lakes.

## **PRE-PLAN CONSIDERATIONS**

- Special needs for exhibitors (PA systems, AV equipment, fish tanks, computer modem, etc.)
- Darkened space for AV
- Radio and TV hook ups for live broadcasts
- Garbage and recycling bins
- Insurance coverage
- Traffic control, security
- Tables and chairs (and a method to move them)
- Maps of the grounds layout and location of booths to hand out
- The day's agenda
- List of volunteers, their jobs and times they will be working
- Signs for booths and parking
- Exit surveys

## **LOCATION**

For choice of location you should consider: 1) availability of support facilities; 2) easy access for the public, including those with disabilities; 3) safety; 4) local traffic patterns and parking; 5) presence of shoreline conditions deemed conducive to the objectives; 6) the capability of the facility to handle your needs (parking, electrical hook-ups, bathrooms, access, insurance, shelter in case of rain, etc.); and 7) any other factors. It may be wise to contact the area police or sheriff to discuss safety and assistance with traffic.

If more than one lake and their corresponding organizations are involved, the site might be rotated from year to year and/or moved around on the basis of changing lake management concerns. Cooperation with site owners and managers is an absolute necessity.

As with any event involving large numbers of people (think positively!), lake fairs need someone to sweat the site details. A subgroup of the planning committee should go over the site with someone responsible for the management of the site. The following details need to be decided ahead of time, lest panic break out on the day of the fair:

- Placement of various activities to complement each other and avoid conflicts;
- Availability of power and docks or piers for demonstrations;

- Parking and vehicular traffic control, including coordination with local law enforcement;
- Pedestrian traffic through the grounds;
- Availability of secure overnight storage for equipment;
- Whether and how food will be served; fund raiser?
- Audio-visual equipment needed and sources;
- Volunteer help needed on the day of fair (parking, hosts and hostesses, survey-takers, emcee, cooks/servers, others).

## SOME OTHER THOUGHTS

- Have an open and expansive mind-set on the types of people and groups you invite. Many groups you may not normally consider can impact lakes and rivers and water quality in general. A little fun and education or participation may be in order for groups with interests like nature and wildlife, flowers and plants, tourism, snowmobiling, etc. On the other hand, try not to let the theme of the fair get buried in too many non-lake topics.
- Plan children's activities as well to attract the whole family to the lake fair. Keep an educational theme (i.e. Project Aquatic WILD, fish prints on t-shirts, floating classrooms) with lake and related nature topics. This can give parents time to explore the booths and participate in workshops or lectures.
- A major suggestion is that the atmosphere of the day be casual; no tight agenda—a chance for people to chat with other lake folks and professionals over a brat and a cup of coffee. Give folks the opportunity to glean, at their own pace, information about issues that concern them.
- We recommend that any professional people and agency folks that attend wear an easy-to-read name tag. It was also noted that their tables or booths should be well marked with their names, where they are from, and what their expertise is. It may be a good idea to have a floor plan to hand out to attendees showing where the booths or events are, and detailing what can be learned at each, and when.
- Lake Fairs have varied in their format. Some have had a formal lecture as part of the day's activities; others have depended entirely on the interaction between attendees and the people at the booths. Exhibitors have ranged from DNR lakes program coordinators to folks selling bat houses. Entertainment has run the gambit from chainsaw carvers, clowns, and fiddle players to waterski shows. Even hot air balloons have been



suggested. Some have focused on youth, others on adults.

- You may consider holding the Lake Fair in conjunction with some other area event to insure a large group at both events and share expenses.

## THE BIG EVENT:

On the day of the lake fair eat a big breakfast because you probably won't have time to eat the rest of the day. Get out early with your volunteers to give yourself time to deal with last minute technicalities. There's always that one detail everyone overlooked. Take along your sense of humor and enjoy the chaos. Remember...the fair's participants are there to have fun and so should you, so don't worry. The idea is to keep it informal and fun.

You may want to have a few volunteers acting as hosts and hostesses, to show people where things are, or hand out a schedule of activities as participants enter the grounds. An exit survey of attendees can be employed to evaluate the event (see survey). Entertainment might be added to lighten up the event, but be careful not to choose types and amounts of entertainment that detract from the rest of the event. That can defeat your educational objectives.

Be sure to invite the regional press folks. You may even want to conduct live, remote broadcasts with local radio stations featuring interviews with

speakers, demonstrators and fair organizers.

## WRAP UP

At the end of the day, pull your planning committee together for a short debriefing or wrap-up session. Ask what went well, what didn't work, what to change, and how individuals of the committee feel about the event. This becomes the starting point for next year's planning. Don't forget to thank your volunteers for their hard work and good ideas.

After the fair, circulate the tabulated results of your exit survey to the planning committee. A press release summarizing the highlights of the fair might be sent to the media.

Finally, celebrate a job well done!

We have just shared what we experienced with these Lake Fairs. We hope these hints help in your endeavors. Please share your successes and failures so we can add them to this learning base.

Written by:

Jim Resick	Resource Agent UW-Extension Shawano County
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## SAMPLE PRESS RELEASE

### "LAKE FAIR SET BY AREA LAKE GROUPS, AGENCIES"

for release \_\_\_\_\_ 1994

Area lake organizations, state and county agencies have come up with a way to combine the hard facts of living on lakes and lake ecosystems protection with a healthy dose of good old-fashioned fun. Lake Fairs are an educational and entertaining lake experience. These Lake Fairs feature "hands on" educational events, demonstrations, food, entertainment and a chance to talk one-on-one with lake professionals. They show individual lake shore residents and lake users what they can do to help manage lakes.

The first annual \_\_\_\_\_ Counties Lake Fair will take place Saturday, June 6th, from 9:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. at \_\_\_\_\_

The theme of this year's fair, which is free and open to the public, is "Discover How you Fit into the Puzzle." The fair will help individuals choose management practices that prevent water pollution and maintain aquatic plant populations in good balance, according to fair sponsors.

"Lakeshore residents, boaters and fishermen often look to local lake organizations and DNR to manage the lake resource, but individuals also have a big impact on the quality of our lakes," said Resource Development Agent \_\_\_\_\_ of \_\_\_\_\_ County, UW-Cooperative Extension.

"There are a lot of things the individual lakeshore property owner can do to keep soil and chemicals out of lakes, manage aquatic plant beds near shore, help the fishery, and improve shoreline aesthetics," added \_\_\_\_\_ Lake Management Specialist with the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (DNR).

The fair will feature information and demonstrations on water resource management, fisheries, nonpoint pollution, self-help lake monitoring, landscaping for aesthetics and water quality, a groundwater-lakes model, aquatic plants, permits, and other topics.

Conservation, County Zoning, Menominee Tribe Environmental Services and other offices will be on hand.

A nationally known aquatic ecologist, Dr. \_\_\_\_\_, will talk at 11:00 a.m. on the effect exotic species—like Eurasian milfoil—have on lakes. He will also speak on how the environment, in turn, influences aquatic plants.

Vendors of near-shore aquatic plant harvesting and raking devices and bottom screens will also demonstrate their equipment throughout the fair schedule. A large mechanical harvester will demonstrate how lake organizations are harvesting plants.

A fish lunch will be served by the \_\_\_\_\_ Lake Fish Committee. Fair sponsors say the event will take place rain or shine, since many displays will be indoors.

The Fair is sponsored by: property owner associations of \_\_\_\_\_ Lakes; Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources; UW-Extension offices of Shawano and Menominee Counties; and, the UW-Extension Lakes Management Program at UW-Stevens Point.

## SAMPLE LAKE FAIR SURVEY QUESTIONS

Hi, I'm \_\_\_\_\_ from the lake fair planning group. Can I please ask you a few questions about the fair, so we can make a better one next year? It will only take a few minutes.

1. Do you own or rent lakeshore property? On which lake?
2. Where is your permanent home? (City or Village Post Office)
3. What did you like best about the fair?
4. What would you like to see changed or added to next year's fair?
5. What did you learn at the fair which you expect to use or apply?
6. How did you hear about the Lake Fair?

THANK YOU FOR YOUR HELP!

## SAMPLE SUGGESTIONS for BOOTHS

BRYAN PIERCE - Resource Development Agent  
Oneida County UW-Extension

### **Suggestions for Education Booths:**

Extension

Groundwater Model

Lakes Program

WAL booth

DNR Lakes program - self-help monitoring-aquatic plants

DNR Fisheries - traveling aquarium display

Aquatic Plant ID

Water chemistry

DNR Water Regs. & Zoning

Tribal Natural Resource management

Trout Lake Limnology Lab

State and federal hatcheries

Kemp Station

ECCOLA (local environmental group)

NW Conservation Alliance

Northwoods Wildlife Center

Project Loon Watch

Jim Peck (naturalist)

Journey into the Wild

Lake Districts & Associations

Forest Co. Lake Assn.

U.S. Forest Service - archaeological dig, lakeshore cultural resources

APHIS - beaver control

DNR Boating Safety

Howard Young Medical Center - Water Safety

Minocqua Lakes Priority Watershed Project

County zoning

**Suggestions for Vendor Booths:**

- Plant management
- Lake Management consultants
- Private hatcheries
- Lakeshore landscaping nurseries
- Tom Blake - no phosphate fertilizer
- Septic system education
- Silent sports - canoe/kayak/sailboard
- Water skiers groups - etiquette
- Fishing Hotspots
- Muskies Inc.
- Trout Unlimited
- Guides Associations

**Educational Programs during the day:**

- Aquatic WILD
- DNR Angler Education
- Fish Prints on T-shirts
- Critter Catching
- Northwoods Wildlife Center
- Ron Eckstein - eagles & osprey
- Water chemistry sampling/secchi disk demo
- Birchbark canoe demonstration
- Septic System model
- Loon watch
- Videos

**Other possible activities:**

- Face painting
- Clowns
- Music
- Authors
- Decoy carving
- Theater skits, mime?
- Story telling
- Local historians

\*Put the name of the responsible person behind each activity.

## **Preliminary List of Lake Fair Committees:**

### **Publicity**

- News releases
- Live radio
- TV releases, PSA's
- Lake Tides
- WAL Newsletter
- Others

### **Food Booths**

- Wisconsin Assn. of Lakes
- Mid Lake District?
- Other Lake associations or districts
- Service Clubs
- Sports Clubs
- Schools
- Churches
- Scouts

### **Education and Vendor Booths**

### **Entertainment**

### **Facilities**

- Tent
- Banner
- Booths - layout, floor plans, backdrops, tables
- Electric
- Audio/Visual